

The Desert

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VOL. I.

THE HORRORS OF OAKENDALE ABBEY.

A ROMANCE.

(Continued from No. 11.)

"One morning Eugene shewed me a letter he had received, which recalled him to England. He said it came from a gentleman who was his guardian, and whom he was bound to obey. There were some sentences in the letter, which were couched in such terms as led us both to think, that when the writer talked of forming improper connexions, by remaining too long in one place, he alluded to our intimacy.

"Eugene at first declared he would not obey the mandate, and that he had long enough submitted to the controul and caprice of those whom he really believed had no right to direct, or take any part in his conduct. As to myself, I was totally incapable of giving advice; but there was no occasion; M. Du Frene decided for us. He also had received a letter on the same subject, and Eugene's fate was determined. If ever there was a moment in which my love for M. Du Frene was abated, it was when he peremptorily told him he must not delay his departure. I felt as if I had received a blow, which deprived me of all my faculties; nor could all the assurances of Eugene's faith and everlasting love reconcile me to the idea of losing him. I considered his departure as the deprivation of all my happiness; nor could all the admonitions of madame calm my feelings. Indeed those dear parents lamented his loss almost as much as myself; and when the day arrived on which he was to take his leave, I scarce know which of us were most concerned.

"M. Du Frene pressed him to his heart, and conjured him never to forget friends to whom he was so dear; and madame said a thousand kind and affectionate things to him. As to myself, I stood like the picture of despair; and when Eugene pressed me to his bosom, I felt as if my whole existence was at an end, and I could not articulate a sentence. Ah! too just was my presentiment that we should never meet again. He promised to write, and (if possible) to return; but never, from that sad hour, did we hear or see any more of him; and from that time happiness seemed to have fled with my lost Eugene.

"M. Du Frene was a politician. What grief did that circumstance occasion to madame! We used all our persuasions to keep him at home, and to take no part in the broils which began to be very general; but it was to no purpose that we urged him to be neuter; He was too

much attached to his king to bear quietly the disaffection which prevailed, and every where began to spread itself. All our entreaties were used in vain; a whole year passed in this unpleasant state, and no intelligence of Eugene arrived to sooth the tedious hours, rendered still more irksome by M. Du Frene's frequent quarrels and uneasiness, by the melancholy which always pervaded his countenance, and the continual dread we were under of some new calamity happening to the state.

"In this distressed condition we continued till the fatal tenth of August, 1792; that era of everlasting disgrace to the French nation, when Paris was deluged in human gore. On that sad day M. Du Frene had gone from home early in the morning, and I had been vainly endeavouring to persuade madame Du Frene that her fears were needless, when a loud knocking at the door, and a tumult, made me venture to look through the window; when, ah! how does my soul sicken at the remembrance! I saw my ever-dear, my more than parent's head, stuck upon a pike, reeking and clotted with blood! I uttered a scream, and hid my eyes with my hands; when madame Du Frene coming to my assistance, discovered the dreadful object which had occasioned my terror! She gave a piercing scream, which, methinks, now vibrates on my ear, and dropped senseless on the floor.

"Greatly as I was affected, I exerted myself to assist and recal her to life, which it was some time before she shewed any signs of. When she, in some degree, recovered, she observed a profound silence upon the subject of the horrible sight we had both of us but too plainly seen. Her sighs, indeed, were deep and bitter; but it seemed as if she could not bear to name the shocking circumstance which occasioned them, and to which she must have been witness. We had scarce time to recollect ourselves, and my dear madame Du Frene shewed but little signs of animation, when some of our friends assembled at our house, and earnestly entreated we would lose no time in making our escape, if we wished to avoid the cruel fate which some of those dearest to us had experienced. We neither of us seemed sufficiently interested to prolong our wretchedness, or attend to their remonstrances, and we appeared rather to wish for death than to avoid it; but our friends used such pressing solicitations, and begged so earnestly, that we would leave Paris with them, that we began (though reluctantly) to put up our valuables, and to prepare for our departure. Little as I cared for life, or had any prospect to invite its continuance, yet the name of England sounded with a sweet sensation. A thousand tender ideas were associated with that dear country; and the fond remembrance of Eugene played round my heart amidst the for-

rows that encompassed me. I joined my endeavours to rouse madame Du Frene from her lethargy of woe, and to fly whilst it was yet in our power; and having succeeded, we left Paris that night, and travelled with as much expedition as the French carriages could make till we got to Boulogne, where we found the town crowded with emigrants, waiting to cross the water.

"When the wind was fair, and the vessels were ready, we were hurried down to the quay in such numbers, and put on board in so much confusion, that I was unfortunately separated from my dear madame Du Frene, and put on board of a merchantman.

"As soon as I found myself separated from her, I entreated, and offered largely to the captain if he would set me on shore again; but he was deaf to all my cries, and said he would not lose a moment. My misery was not to be described! I found myself encompassed by strangers; and what was worse, I understood we were to be set on shore on the Welch coast.

"As to the fate of madame Du Frene, from that hour to this, I have remained in total ignorance about it; and it has been an everlasting cause of sorrow to me!

"We landed in Milford-Haven, at a place which appeared almost uninhabited; and consisted only of an inn and a few houses. It might be considered as a bathing-place, but of little resort. I fixed my residence in a small lodging near the sea, to which my eyes were incessantly turned, in the hope of seeing some vessel which might bring Madame Du Frene to the same spot.

"Most of the people, who landed with me, dispersed to different parts of England; but as I could think of no place to prefer to this, I thought it best, for the present, to remain where I was. I was attended by a young woman of the village, named Mary Morgan; she was neat, and well behaved; and I passed most of my time in wandering with her on the Beach. I wished to go to London, as the most likely place to hear of Madame Du Frene; but I was afraid to go there alone, there not being in that vast metropolis one person with whom I could claim acquaintance.

"It happened one evening that, as I was walking upon the Beach with Mary, I perceived myself observed by a good-looking man, who appeared to be about forty years of age, and who seemed to eye me with uncommon attention. There was something in his person and manners, which not only attracted my notice, but also my partiality. Our eyes met; and, as I was standing still on the Beach, I was not displeased at being accosted by him with some general observations upon the place we were in, and the sea prospect, &c.

"The next day we met upon the same spot, when our conversation was again renewed. We talked on various subjects, and he told me his name was Thoranby; that he lived in London, and generally came every summer to some place of this kind for the benefit of sea-bathing, and to be retired.

"Upon his saying that he lived in London, I imprudently replied, 'that of all places I wished to go there; at the same time telling him that part of my history which had separated me from my more than mother, and my ardent wish to find her again.'

"He seemed pleased with the affectionate duty I expressed; and, after paying me some compliments on my extreme sensibility, he said, 'he had a sister in London, who would, he was sure, be happy to receive me; and would unite her endeavours to mine in order to discover Madame Du Frene.' How did my heart overflow with gratitude at this unexpected invitation! Young and unacquainted as I was with the arts of men, I hastily accepted his offer; and, indeed, my joy and impatience to begin my journey was too conspicuous to be concealed. Accordingly it was agreed, that he should set out on the next day, in order to prepare his sister for my arrival; and that in three days after I should follow with Mary, who had agreed to accompany me to London.

"Nothing could exceed my eagerness and impatience for the arrival of the day on which I was to set out; and I scarce gave myself time for proper rest, and none at all for reflection. The hope of meeting my dear Madame Du Frene, together with that secret wish which still glowed in my bosom of hearing something of Eugene, was cherished with such fond imagination, that I had almost realized my wishes to a certainty; and when we entered London, my fancy had formed so many fair ideas, by which I was wholly engrossed, that I hardly attended to the astonished exclamations of poor Mary, at the sight of the streets, number of people, carriages, &c. &c. which to me, who had lived so long in Paris, was nothing extraordinary; but when the carriage drove up to a very magnificent house in Portland-Place, my heart felt an unusual oppression; and, for the first time, suggested to me the impropriety of following to London a person of whom I knew so little; however, reflections of this kind were now too late. The chaise stopped; the bell was rung, and two footmen, in splendid liveries, ushered me through the hall, up a stone staircase.

"My astonishment increased as I ascended the steps. Mr. Thoranby had told me he lived in a handsome house in London; but I had no idea it was so superb, still less that his sister lived in this elegant style. I fancied there must have been some mistake, and a variety of reflections rushed with rapidity upon my mind, and a thousand forebodings, of I knew not what, agitated me so much, that I fancied I did not hear distinctly whom the servant addressed.

"Mr. Thoranby (who then made his appearance) by the appellation of 'my Lord'; but when he approached to receive me, with a malignant smile of exultation, my heart died within me, and I faintly exclaimed, 'I am betrayed.'

"It was in vain that his Lordship endeavoured to sooth me, after having acknowledged that he had deceived me respecting his having a sister, as well as his name and rank. I at once saw my ruined situation; and I exclaimed on the cruelty of his conduct, demanding immediate release. He pleaded the most ardent love, protesting that he could not live without me. Finding me deaf to his vows, and resolute in my determination, this wretched Lord Oakendale confessed to me that he was a married man!

"Yes, my dear Laura,' says he, 'you should pity rather than condemn a man who is united to a woman for whom he can conceive nothing but aversion, and who is in no respect calculated for domestic happiness, whilst his heart is enraptured by your virtues, and absolutely devoted to your service; nothing but this prior tie should prevent me from instantly offering you my vows at the altar. Let me, therefore, loveliest of woman! secure to you any other contract which shall be equally binding, and a most sacred promise to marry you the very moment it is in my power.'

"I had scarce patience to hear him to the end — 'Marry me! I replied; is it possible that your vanity can suggest such an idea? Did you bring me here to dazzle me with your splendor, as a means to gain me to your purpose? When I first became acquainted with you, it was your age which secured my confidence; and now that I find you are such a depraved character — I was proceeding; but I found I had touched a string the most discordant to his ear, that of his age.

"Peace, madam,' said he; 'nor dare to insult me thus. Age, indeed! know silly girl, that you are in my power; and if you provoke that power, I warn you to take the consequence.' With these words he hastily quitted the room, leaving me to reflect upon my distressed situation, with the additional torment of self-accusation for having brought myself into his power.

"During two whole days I saw nothing of his lordship, though I learned from Mary (who was still allowed to attend me) that he was in the house, and that all the servants had orders to obey me in every thing, except assisting me to leave it. She likewise informed me, that lady Oakendale was no further from London than Hampstead. Various were my conjectures upon his conduct. Sometimes I thought he would relent, and give me my liberty; at others, that he was only meditating further mischief. I had no hope of making my escape; for the rooms I was allowed to occupy were not in the front of the house, and only looked into a close paved court, from whence I could not possibly get out, were I to attempt the windows. My mind was harassed by sleepless nights and continual fatigue.

"On the third morning lord Oakendale entered the apartment; he shewed some degree of compassion at my pale and altered looks; and then said, 'You have foolishly rejected all my offers; but surely that must proceed from a hasty judgment, and because you have not well considered them. However, as I cannot bring myself to part with you entirely, I have thought of a plan which will give you an opportunity of considering my offers more deliberately; and let me add, with less haughtiness. I mean to

send you down to an old abbey in Cumberland, with Mary to accompany you, or any other of my domestics whom you may prefer. It is true, you will be but ill accommodated; but for that you may thank your own obstinacy, and you will there have leisure to consider my proposals with the attention they deserve.'

"The idea of an abbey made me shudder; but when I considered I should be released from my present prison, and that he said not a word of going with me, I thought it most prudent to dissimble; I therefore told him, in a milder tone than I had spoken before, that I was ready to follow whithersoever my destiny should lead me; that I chose Mary for my companion, and that I would consider of what he had said with more moderation. A smile of approbation sat upon his countenance as I uttered the last sentence. He took me tenderly by the hand, and said, 'then I will instantly order the carriage to be got ready; and, having assured him it should not wait for me, he quitted me to give the necessary orders.

"The moment he was gone, a gleam of satisfaction overspread my mind at the idea of leaving that detested house. At the same moment a transitory regret occurred at the thoughts of leaving London; that London, to which I had hastened with such rapidity, and which probably contained all that was most dear to me; yet, to gain, in some degree, my liberty, and to leave lord Oakendale was my first object; and I resolved to make no more hasty determinations; nor even attempt to make my escape without a great deal of deliberation and circumspection. Mary consented to accompany me; but it was evidently with reluctance. The splendor of lord Oakendale's establishment had attracted her admiration, and she wished to stay longer and see more; but she was a foolish uninformed creature, and on that score I excused her; and thinking she was a more trusty companion than any lord Oakendale could furnish me with, I pressed her to accompany me; at the same time giving her some money for the services she had already done me, and in order to secure her future fidelity; we therefore stepped into the carriage, which I found was loaded with provisions, that we might have no occasion to stop, except for change of horses. We were attended by two servants on horse-back, and such precautions taken, that it would have been in vain to have meditated an escape. How ardently did I wish to be attacked by robbers, as the only means I could foresee of gaining my liberty; but no such good fortune happening, we, after a fatiguing journey, arrived at Oakendale-abbey." And here Laura continued to relate all the terrors she had experienced in that place, as well as the manner of her escaping; not omitting to inform Mrs. Greville the circumstance of her finding the letter-case she had given to Eugene.

When she had finished her story, Mrs. Greville said, "Indeed, my dear young lady, your story is replete with uncommon circumstances of distress; and I am as much interested by it, as I am surprised and entertained. If your appearance prejudiced me in your favour, your uncommon sufferings and merit intitle you to my regard and protection, which you may be assured of possessing as long as you are disposed to continue under my roof.

"I have (continued the good lady) a nephew, who is married to a very amiable woman; his name is Sir George Orland, and they pass great part of the year with me; you will, I am sure, like each other, and if you pay them a visit in London, they will protect you from the attempts of lord Oakendale, as well as assist your inquiries concerning those so deservedly dear to you."

Laura could not find words sufficient to thank Mrs. Greville for her extreme kindness; and, having exhausted the effusions of her grateful heart, she began asking Mrs. Greville some questions as to what she knew, or had ever heard, relating to Oakendale-abbey.

"Why," returned Mrs. Greville, "when you named Oakendale-abbey, as having resided there, I confess I shuddered at the idea; nevertheless I would not have you suppose that I believe in any of the idle reports current in the neighbourhood; for they are carried to a degree of absurdity and superstition beyond all credit. When they tell you of men and women being seen carrying their heads in their hands, and of monstrous eyes looking through the windows flaming with fire, one is more inclined to laugh at such idle tales than to be alarmed by them. But I must own I have long suspected there was some mystery to be unfolded at the abbey; but of what nature I cannot even guess. The surprising things you witnessed there confirms this belief, and I wish it were seriously investigated."

"It is now many years since I saw the inside of the abbey; and it was by no means a fit residence for the fair inhabitant whom I went to visit; it must be now infinitely worse, and a frightful place to send a young person to! I only wonder how you could support yourself under such circumstances; and it is like the rest of lord Oakendale's conduct."

"My dear Madam," said Laura, "I understand the abbey had not been inhabited since the memory of any person now living; who then could you go there to visit?"

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Greville, "I ought to explain myself; for what I said must seem as mysterious as any of the stories which are related. I went to see a picture of the present lord's mother, which, upon some family feuds, was sent down to this abbey as a punishment, or rather mortification, to the person it represented. It was allowed to be an uncommonly and well-finished picture, and was done by an Italian master; and the sweetness of the countenance exceeded any I ever saw, except that I am now beholding!"

Laura bowed her thanks for the compliment, and asked Mrs. Greville "if the picture did not hang in a room which she described; and if it was not in the Vandyke taste?"

Mrs. Greville replied, "that it was, and was a beautiful full length portrait."

"Yes," said Laura, "it was in that room that I discovered the letter-case; and I can never be persuaded but Eugene must have been in that apartment; for I think (she added, with a sigh) he would not have parted with it to any one else."

"That is, indeed," said Mrs. Greville, "a very extraordinary circumstance, and which time only can discover, and will, I have no doubt; for depend upon it, my dear, you will live to see the clouds disperse, which at present

seem to hang over you; and you will one day meet with the reward your merit deserves.—In the meanwhile make yourself easy under my protection; and wait with patience the will of that all-wise disposer of events, who never deserted the innocent, and who is a Father to the fatherless."

Laura said she had every reason to be grateful to Providence, who had, in so many instances, shewn a manifest interposition in her favour, and never more than by placing her under the protection where she now felt herself so happily situated; and in which secure asylum we will, for the present, leave her, and return to give some account of lord Oakendale, who, on arriving at the abbey, and finding Laura had escaped, became outrageous, and almost frantic with disappointment.

Mary was interrogated with violence and suspicion, as an accomplice in the plan; but she declared her innocence with so much simplicity, that his lordship's anger at length gave way to belief, and he consented to her entreaties of being sent back again into Wales.

His disappointment added fresh fuel to his passion and his resentment; for he vowed vengeance on the poor devoted Laura, should he ever get her again into his hands, of which he entertained but little doubt; knowing that without either horse or carriage, or any one to assist her, she could not have escaped far from the village; and that, by bribes and promises, he should very soon have her again in his power. He determined to sleep that night at the Abbey, in the same bed which had been occupied by Laura and Mary. Another was fitted up in an adjoining room for his servant.

It was the first time in his life he had ever been in the Abbey. He thought it horrible and gloomy; and he would have felt some compassion for Laura, for having been confined to such a place, had not her recent flight steeled his heart with resentment, and shut every avenue to pity.

The idea of supernatural appearances had never, since he was a child, disturbed his imagination; he therefore, divested of all fear, composed himself to take a refreshing portion of sleep, in order to be the better enabled to make a more vigilant pursuit after Laura the next day. He had not, however, been in bed two hours before he was very much surprised by a foot-step, and a low murmuring voice, which appeared to be not far distant. He called his servant.

The poor man readily obeyed the summons, for he had been equally alarmed. He entered the room pale and trembling, and was going to relate his fears; but lord Oakendale felt his valour return, and being ashamed to confess his fright to his servant, he only said there were rats in the house; talked loud, blustered, and ordered his servant to return to his bed.

In about an hour the steps and the voice was heard again. The idea that Laura was concealed in some part of the Abbey occurring to his mind, he hastily called up his servant, and ordering him to bring lights, he prepared himself to search the Abbey. The man having heard the report of its being haunted, and being already very much alarmed at what had passed, was not quite so willing to enter into such service, and endeavoured to persuade his lord to wait for

the morning; but this suggestion only stimulated lord Oakendale to begin the search, having worked up his mind to the firm opinion, that he should find Laura. They each took a light, and proceeded through all the apartments; lord Oakendale with his sword drawn in his hand, swearing to murder the first person he found, if they should endeavour to screen Laura from his possession. He likewise exhorted his servant to be courageous, and to follow his example.

The man stood greatly in need of these exhortations; for as he tremblingly led the way, and carried the lights, he expected to lose his senses by the sight of some tremendous apparition; and when Lord Oakendale opened the rusty locks and creaking doors, he thought his heart would have died within him.

When they approached the room, in which was the trunk and skeleton, lord Oakendale made a stop.—The gloominess of its appearance, rendered doubly so by the still dark hour of the night, had a momentary effect upon his resolution; but he resumed his courage, and surveyed the room. The servant trembled, and scarcely lifted up his eyes. They approached the trunk wherein the skeleton was deposited. Lord Oakendale ordered his servant to lift up the lid; and the light had no sooner glanced upon the ghastly figure, than the man, dropping the lid from his hand, exclaimed, "God preserve us! here is a dead man, bigger than a giant, with saucer eyes, and huge limbs!"

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed his lord, at the same moment examining it himself, though not without feeling a chill at this relic of mortality; and he was for a moment undetermined whether or not to proceed, when the idea of Laura again renewed his courage, and he advanced to the cloister, and following the light carried by the terrified servant, arrived at the partition, which presented neither a door, or any means of opening it, whatsoever.

This circumstance strongly excited his curiosity, and this aided by disappointment, brought him to a desperate pitch of resolution; and observing the boards were but thin, he set his whole force against them, and, with a terrible crash, they at once gave way. A confused rumbling noise assailed his ears; but how were all his senses stiffened with horror at the sight of a human body, apparently dead, but sitting upright in a coffin!

Lord Oakendale started at the sight; the sword dropped from his hand, and he stood petrified with terror and amazement. The servant had fallen down, and nearly extinguished the light; and as lord Oakendale stooped down to preserve it, he fancied a cold hand grasped him. His trembling legs scarce supported him from this scene of terror! The servant was nearly deprived of his senses. His master assisted him to rise, and hastily turning towards the cloister, they made the best of their way through the apartments they had before so minutely examined, rushed out of the Abbey, and alarmed the village!

The clock struck four, and some of the peasants were already rising to their work; and seeing his lordship, as they supposed making his escape from the Abbey, they, concluding he had seen something to terrify and alarm him,

gathered round, with a hope of being gratified by some marvellous adventure; but his lordship was in no humour to relate wonders. He ordered horses to the carriage, and getting into it, bestowed something like a curse upon Laura, the Abbey, and all the infernal spirits that inhabited it.

In this disposition he pursued his way to London. Various were his conjectures during his journey, and he could form his ideas into no system of probability as to the strange and unaccountable sights he had beheld at the Abbey. He resolved, indeed, to have them thoroughly investigated on some future occasion; but he never intended again to encounter them himself. He suffered great uneasiness on account of Laura. He found he loved her with sincere affection. Her idea dwelt upon his heart with more uneasy sensations than he had ever before experienced, although his love for her was neither founded upon esteem or delicacy. But he was a mere sensualist; yet a something of tender anxiety was combined with his passion for her. "Where could she be, and to what evils and sufferings might she be exposed?" These were intruding questions that forced themselves with compassionate tenderness, upon a heart but little alive to the softer feelings of humanity. In this state he will therefore leave him for the present, in order to give our readers an account of some other personages who have as yet appeared but in the back ground of the history.

Lady Oakendale, of whom we have said that she was the only daughter of lord Westhaven, and that her immense fortune was the only inducement lord Oakendale had for making her his wife, was, as has been before related, by no means calculated to sooth the brow of care, by which her lord was now oppressed; on the contrary, they had conceived an aversion bordering upon hatred for each other. But, in order to elucidate her history, we must go back to a very early period of her life. She was an only child, and had lost her mother when she was very young; and from that circumstance might date all her misfortunes, as she was consigned to the care of a governess, and other mercenary dependants, whose chief object was to inculcate in her the idea of her own consequence, by continually reminding her of her great fortune she would in future possess, as well as the high rank she held in life.

After being taught the various accomplishments necessary for her situation, in so superficial a manner, that they could neither be an entertainment to others, nor any resource to herself, she found a void in her mind, which she would sometimes endeavour to fill up by attempts at fancy-work, or some ingenious device peculiar to the sex; but on these occasions she was always informed, that such employments were by no means fit for her to engage in; and that there were people sufficient who would be glad to do such little services for the gratuity which she had it so amply in her power to bestow.

Thus was her mind (perhaps naturally good) withdrawn from every source of instruction or amusement, and left to the idle workings of phantastic conceits, which will always, if not subdued by rational amusements lead to

an indolent lassitude totally destructive of every moral and social virtue.

As soon as she was of an age to appear at her father's table, and be introduced by some of his acquaintance to public places, her whole mornings were spent in trying on various caps, and other dresses; consulting her glass, and assorting her ribbands and feathers to her complexion, and the colour of her hair. Her person was neither handsome or otherwise; her skin was fair, but her features were irregular and wanted animation; and she had acquired an air of hauteur, which, being unaccompanied by grace, bordered upon ill-humour.

Lord Westhaven, after the death of his wife, grew fond of drinking, and engaged in a dissipated way of life, neither consistent with his age nor station. He loved his daughter, as something very nearly allied to himself; but he took no pains to regulate her conduct, or to improve her understanding. He frequently brought men home to dinner, whose free conversation was neither suppressed by her presence, nor regulated by propriety; and from these she heard toasts and sentiments by no means proper for her contemplation; which gave her a bold assurance, but little consistent with the delicacy of the feminine character.

She was known to have an immense fortune, and of course was addressed by every man who wished to advance his own.

An officer in the guards, of the name of Vincent, was the most assiduous in his attentions to her; and, indeed, for a time, kept all the rest at a distance. He had an uncommonly fine person, and was sufficiently well skilled in the science of fashion and flattery to render himself agreeable. He studied her disposition with the nicest attention; and, being well aware that her father designed her for a man of rank, having no pretensions of that nature at that time, he was resolved to supplant those that had; he therefore thought he had only to secure her affections as the prelude to the possession of her fortune.

She loved Vincent as a girl of her education and disposition would naturally do, who was captivated by his person; and pleased with his attentions. But she knew he could not introduce her into the rank in life her ambition led her to suppose she must fill, and she could not endure the sound of plain Mrs. Vincent; yet the idea of a tender lover, encouraged in secret, and met by stratagem, enraptured her imagination, and was so consonant to her wishes, that what she first admitted as a charming amusement for her leisure hours, became a serious consideration, and in the end a source of increasing misery.

It happened about this time that the earl of Oakendale was introduced to her by her father; and, after a few interviews, she was told to consider him as her lover and destined husband.

Lord Oakendale was a man whom Miss Rainsford might have liked, had not her heart been devoted to Vincent; yet the idea of being a countess, with all the flattering appendages of a title, gave a preponderancy to the scale of grandeur, and made her accept lord Oakendale's proposals, and her father's commands, without any seeming reluctance.

Meantime Vincent could not bear to lose the golden prize, and have the mortification to behold, what he had thought so well secured to himself, given to another. Thus fired with jealousy, and disappointed in his ambitious views, he meditated mischief and revenge. First he thought to induce her to consent to a clandestine marriage; but the idea that, in case of high resentment from her father, she might, instead of a large portion, not bring him a shilling, proved a too weighty consequence, and he durst not risk such a chance.

The next suggestion wore a more feasible aspect. Miss Rainsford loved him passionately, though he believed she loved title and splendor better; the only way then to supplant his rival, and secure his interest, was to make a marriage with him necessary to save her reputation. There were tender moments, in which Miss Rainsford's prudence might yield to love, and probable consequences might bring even the earl to solicit a marriage, to which, under no other circumstances, he would have consented.

Having conceived this plan; not indeed the most honourable one, but such as might well be expected from the nature of the parties concerned, he studied, at the next private interview, the most insinuating address, and the most pathetic complaints. He knew the exact state of Miss Rainsford's heart, and upon what principle all her sentiments were guided. He lamented, in terms of despair, his cruel and unmerited fate; he declared his love was founded upon the noblest basis, that of affection for her alone; whilst lord Oakendale's was merely for her fortune, without the smallest particle of passion for that enchanting person, which was the sole object of his adoration; yet such was his regard, such his self-denial, that he would renounce all hope, and yield her to his hated rival; whilst he tore himself away, never more to behold her, and fought, in the field of battle, that death which alone could release him from the misery of his present sufferings.

This was a language too persuasive, and too powerful, for the tender feelings of Miss Rainsford. Charmed with such flattering delusions she could refuse nothing to so fond and tender a lover; her melting heart acknowledged all his influence, and she became his mistress. For awhile the stolen enjoyments became sweeter by repetition; but what were the mortifying reflections she underwent, when a short time shewed the effects of their illicit connexion.

This was the boundary of Vincent's wishes, and he concluded his fortune made; yet such was the strange and unnatural disposition of Miss Rainsford, whether ambition got the better of all softer ties, or from whatever cause her mind was influenced, she no sooner discovered her situation than she conceived a mortal aversion to the author of her disgrace; and, contrary to all his expectations, and to his utter astonishment, she gave every encouragement to the match with lord Oakendale. Struck with aversion and disgust to the woman, who could be capable of acting so contrary to delicacy and every feminine virtue, his heart recoiled at the idea of a marriage with her, and he secretly triumphed in the disgrace of his rival.

(Continued in No. 13.)